

DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES

RESPONSE TO CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL ANNUAL REPORT

September 30, 2013

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**CABINET FOR HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**

Steven L. Beshear
Governor

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Audrey Tayse Haynes
Secretary

September 25, 2013

Dr. Blake Jones
Coordinator, Kentucky Citizens Review Panel
University of Kentucky, College of Social Work
1 Quality Circle, Suite 700
Lexington, KY. 40507

Dear Dr. Jones and Citizen Review Panel Members:

Thank you for the submission of the annual Citizen Review Panel report. Your work provides a valuable tool for quality improvement. Enclosed are the responses regarding the panel's recommendations and observations. I appreciate the diligent work of the Citizen Review Panel members in partnering with the Department for Community Based Services to improve the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and youth and their families.

Sincerely,

Teresa C. James
Commissioner

Enclosure

cc: Governor Steven L. Beshear

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STATE CRP RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REGIONAL CENTRALIZED INTAKE (RCI) TEAM

In State Fiscal Year 2013, the statewide panel continued working in the following chosen groups: centralized intake, community partners, and “gap” children [those children who fall between the cracks of the Department for Community Based Services (DCBS or Department) and the Department of Juvenile Justice]. Ken Schwendeman agreed to continue to monitor the “gap” children and report back to the group as needed. There were no recommendations in regards to “gap” children, but the population receives ongoing monitoring by the panel.

1. Purchase and install an integrated phone system that has the capacity to record calls made to the RCI DCBS Team. With the phone and internet technology in existence today, there are low cost modern phone systems available that will dramatically improve the efficiency of this critical call system.
2. Develop orientation training that prepares new staff assigned to answer calls to do the work performed by the regional centralized intake staff. Ongoing staff training should be provided as well. Gather input from the RCI Supervisors to develop the training content.
3. Determine staffing levels that will ensure 100% of incoming calls are answered promptly. This includes providing the same level of performance Monday - Friday 11:30 P.M. to 8:00 A.M., and on weekends and holidays as is provided during regular work hours.
4. Make appropriate updates to The Worker Information SysTem (TWIST) to reduce software crashes, update the system so RCI staff will not have to search through multiple screens to discover prior abuse history, and update the software so the Response Matrix matches current Standards of Practice (SOP).
5. Provide opportunities for the RCI supervisors to meet quarterly to share information, discuss unique abuse/neglect cases, plan improvements to the RCI system, and offer emotional support to each other.
6. Increase communication with community partners who call to report abuse or neglect, especially school personnel.
7. Identify opportunities to improve communication between RCI staff, child protective services (CPS) staff, and DCBS leadership.

DEPARTMENT for COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES' RESPONSE TO STATE PANEL COMMENTS

The initial concern noted by the panel center around structure and technology in regards to centralized intake.

The department recognizes the importance and value of updated phone technology, as well as technological advances in other areas. Increased phone technology will require additional funding. At this time, DCBS is conducting daily business within its current budgetary limitations, and phone systems are updated as resources permit.

In relation to TWIST updates and software issues, DCBS is currently finalizing changes that will move the centralized intake screens to web-based functionality. The updated and streamlined screens will permit faster data entry, allow smoother transition between screens, and reduce software crashes. The new system is consistent with the current SOP and is much more user friendly. Hotline staff will no longer have to switch between multiple screens and cases to access familial history. Under the new system, this will be accessed using one screen. Personnel viewing demonstrations of the screens observed that the updated technology will enhance the user experience and support more accurate data entry. This new system will be rolled out to staff in the upcoming year.

The panel suggested that the department increase communication with community partners, especially school personnel who call in abuse/neglect reports.

The department introduced a new web based abuse/neglect reporting system in June 2012: <https://prd.chfs.ky.gov/ReportAbuse/home.aspx>. The first phase of that system was distributed to community partners directly. DCBS continues to publicize the existence of the web based reporting site and will continue to do so in the future. In addition, the department has developed ongoing relationships with community partners. For example, at an administrative level, DCBS leadership works with a variety of agencies including school systems, mental health agencies, and public health departments. Department leadership has regular contact with the Commission for Children with Special Health Care Needs, the Court Improvement Project led by the Administrative Office of the Courts, Citizen Foster Care Review Boards, Family Resource and Youth Service Centers (FRYSCs), the

Kentucky Domestic Violence Association, the Kentucky Center for School Safety, Kentucky Education Collaboration for State Agency Children (KECSAC), the Multi-Disciplinary Commission on Sexual Abuse, the Kentucky Association for Sexual Assault Programs, and the State Interagency Council for Services to Children with Emotional Disabilities (SIAC).

Across the Commonwealth, front line local staff engages in ongoing interactions with community partners to ensure children's safety. Personnel work with their school systems, local community mental health agencies, local law enforcement, and the local court system through collaborative meetings as well as case specific situations.

The last concern identified by the panel centers around opportunities to improve communication between regional centralized intake staff, child protection investigators and caseworkers, and agency leadership.

Centralized intake is one component of the department's hierarchy. Most centralized intake teams are co-housed with investigators, case managers, and/or regional personnel. There are also ongoing conversations between centralized intake teams, regional personnel, department leadership, and community partners to assess areas that are strengths and those that need improvement. Central intake supervisors have historically met annually with DCBS leadership to strategize on a variety of issues. The ability to meet more frequently is constrained by financial costs, such as travel expenses and logistics. Fewer meetings ensure that personnel spend more of their time executing tasks associated with the supervision of their respective teams.

DCBS is continually engaged in efforts to identify opportunities to improve services. For example, department personnel may utilize the state continuous quality improvement (CQI) process. As part of the agency's quality assurance plan, all staff are involved in evaluating the effectiveness of services provided to DCBS customers. This includes participation in regular meetings, such as management meetings, case reviews, and the ongoing discussions about the effectiveness of internal systems, procedures, and outcomes. The CQI process is intended to complement the existing agency administrative structure and provides a structured

forum for front line staff to forward concerns and improvement suggestions to DCBS management/leadership.

The department appreciates the panel's feedback and this information will be included as a part of the ongoing effort to improve service. The department will review the current CQI process and evaluate its effectiveness in providing a forum for staff to participate in ongoing quality assurance efforts, as intended.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COMMUNITY PARTNERS TEAM

There were no recommendations from the Community Partner Team. The team expressed an interest in conducting client surveys in the upcoming year as the third piece of determining how clients perceive their availability and access to resources. They will also review Academy curriculum to identify strengths/gaps in the knowledge and skills of front line workers and supervisors related to strengthening community partnerships.

DCBS COMMENTS

DCBS appreciates the panel's efforts in this area as collaboration efforts are critical to providing quality service to our clients. We look forward to receiving the panel's recommendations in the future.

JEFFERSON PANEL SUMMARY and RECOMMENDATIONS

The Jefferson Panel worked on two goals this year: 1) to promote awareness of mandated reporting and appropriate fulfillment of reporting responsibilities through an outreach campaign; and 2) explore and enhance staff and management team perceptions of the Citizen Review Panel (CRP) and our role in system improvement. In Jefferson County, CRP members took action on a mandated reporting outreach campaign. Additionally, CRP members met with each child welfare team to acquaint the staff with the role of the citizen review panel and engage staff in a general discussion about their work. The following were overall themes expressed by department staff:

- Staff is dedicated and attempting to do a good job in the face of a multitude of challenges.
- The workload is overwhelming, leading to poor morale and inadequate services to clients, and staff do not trust that supervisors and administrators are advocating for them.
- Redundancy and administrative tasks and decisions hamper service delivery.
- There are not enough placement resources.
- There is a disconnect among intake, investigation, and ongoing teams concerning which reports should be accepted –there are external pressure from the community calling to report abuse/neglect and internal pressure to accept fewer reports and cases.
- Although the resilience meetings are taking place, staff cannot fully benefit as they are so overwhelmed.
- Staff morale is low.
- Staff has concerns regarding specific local practices, SOPs, laws and regulations and would like a forum to express them.

There were no recommendations listed from the panel with regard to the aforementioned themes.

DCBS COMMENTS on the JEFFERSON SUMMARY and RECOMMENDATIONS

DCBS appreciates the efforts of this panel in conducting an outreach campaign with regard to reporting abuse/neglect. Improving community awareness of reporting requirements and procedures provides critical support for Kentucky's child welfare response.

The department commends the panel for reaching out to individual teams and staff in this region and making efforts to educate staff about their role, as well as expressing appreciation for their work. Social work is a challenging, nuanced professional service, and child welfare is a highly scrutinized area of specialty in that field. Child welfare cases are increasingly complex and our clients are facing increasing economic hardships and shrinking resources. State personnel, including child welfare personnel, have not received a cost of living raise in 10 years despite increasing workloads. In that environment, the department continues to provide ongoing opportunities for the field to work with their leadership through the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process. However, DCBS will review the panel's assessment that Jefferson County staff perceive they do not have an appropriate forum to discuss concerns in regards to best practice and SOP's. Department leadership will also continue to advocate at the legislative level for an increase in personnel and resources for personnel. The department continues to balance these efforts with fiscal reality and its statutory responsibility to serve clients whose cases meet the threshold for a child welfare response.

Regarding placement resources, the panel noted that front line staff expressed concerns that there are not enough resources homes for children and that personnel are unable to devote their time to recruitment efforts due to being assigned investigations. All DCBS Service Regions have personnel teams devoted to recruitment and training of foster homes. Department leadership will confer with regional leadership regarding current utilization of the regional teams.

SOUTHERN BLUEGRASS CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL

The Southern Bluegrass Panel continued to focus efforts on finding ways to break down walls between the agencies in our community that serve children, especially with regard to confidentiality. To do this, they completed a survey with community partners and DCBS staff as well as hosted a "Conversation on Collaboration," which identified barriers, ideas for overcoming barriers, successes in collaboration, and ideas for child welfare change. Additionally, the panel was able to assist some DCBS visitation offices through donations of new furniture, building new toy boxes, and cleaning visitation rooms monthly.

DCBS COMMENTS

There were no specific recommendations for the department from the Southern Bluegrass Panel. DCBS appreciates the efforts of the panel to recognize that collaboration is the key to a family's success, and we hope that this will continue the conversation between our community partners on how to better assist families. Additionally, the department recognizes that some local office visitation rooms were in disrepair and appreciates efforts of the panel to address that need while providing families with a safe, warm, and clean environment in which to visit with one another.

The panel identified two future issues to be addressed: establishing an annual meeting/conference for community partners, which would allow the different agencies to provide training on their area of expertise; and scheduling a meeting between the panel and a family court judge to determine if it is possible to have multiple community partner agencies attend court on the same day in order to obtain parental signatures for release forms for the families each are serving. DCBS commends the panel for this assessment and believes that both efforts will enhance collaboration and communication between agencies.